



Queensland Theatre Company and Queensland Performing Arts Centre present

COUNTRY SONG

A fictionalised celebration of the music and life of Jimmy Little

by Reg Cribb | Original concept by Michael Tuahine

Country Song is a beautiful, musical, witty and warming journey that celebrates the healing power of music. It will take you on a heartfelt journey with toe-tapping tunes and larger-than-life characters.

4 July to 8 August at the Cremorne Theatre, QPAC

Original Concept – Michael Tuahine Director – Wesley Enoch

Designer – Josh McIntosh Lighting Designer – Jason Glenwright Projection Designers - optikal bloc

Musical Director – Jamie Clark Dramaturg – Louise Gough

Cast includes: Elaine Crombie, Bradley McCaw, Megan Sarmardin, Michael Tuahine and Tibian Wyles

This July, Queensland Theatre Company together with the Queensland Performing Arts Centre will celebrate the world premiere of ***Country Song***, an exciting and award-winning work based on the life of Indigenous singing superstar Jimmy Little.

The premise of *Country Song* is this: Jimmy Little is waiting backstage. He's been asked to perform the national anthem, in front of an audience that love him and his music. He is an Australian icon; an entertainer first and foremost. But what does it mean to sing this song now? Does it matter? Who is he really singing for?

In *Country Song*, Jimmy is whisked on a fictional road trip to his past as his story weaves through the history of major social changes of the 1970's. Along the way we hear stories of singers Auriel Andrew, Bobby McLeod and Lionel Rose in this tribute to the era and the music that was a soundtrack for a generation. Once a smiling, cheeky child of Vaudevillians, now a poster boy for Indigenous performers, Jimmy takes us through the thoughts of an artist who must weigh up the political power of his voice. Filled with well-known tunes, *Country Song* is a beautiful, musical, witty and warming journey that celebrates the healing power of music.

Acclaimed actor and musician **Michael Tuahine** came up with the original idea for *Country Song* after being inspired by *Walk the Line*. **Reg Cribb** won the 2013 Rodney Seaborn Playwright's Award for New Work.

Tuahine will play the lead, Jimmy Little, and had a close relationship with the performer after the pair met in 2001.

“When Jimmy said to me, ‘Boy, you are doing a good job’, it was like a blessing from an elder, said Michael, a passionate country music fan.

“Jimmy and I were mates, we would talk on the phone, we toured together – I followed him everywhere. One day over lunch, I said to Jimmy I’d love the opportunity to play him, sing his songs and tell his story. He liked the idea.”



Following Jimmy's death in 2012, Tuahine shared his idea with Queensland Theatre Company's Artistic Director, **Wesley Enoch**.

"He said to me, do your research. I pulled out about three foot of material!

"I'm not a writer but I had started to bring the story together by talking to everyone Jimmy knew – his band, old disc jockeys, his family – anyone who could help tell Jimmy's story. I read old newspaper articles, anything I could get my hands on to get the full picture," said Tuahine.

Country Song is built on stories that aren't widely known. Jimmy's biggest hit, *Royal Telephone* was a No. 1 song in Australia in 1963 and topped the charts ahead of The Beatles and Elvis, yet he couldn't perform in many clubs and pubs because he was Indigenous.

He challenged what people thought of Indigenous performers with his sheer talent and charisma.

"In my culture, you become the custodian of a story and you tell it to the best of your ability. That's what **Reg Cribb**, the writer, and I are trying to do. We want to celebrate and capture the integrity and wonderment of who Jimmy was. We want to share his life, his incredible music and his impact on other musicians," Tuahine said.

John Kotzas, QPAC's Chief Executive said *Country Song* is part of an important collaboration with QTC.

"We work alongside QTC to put Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the spotlight and encourage the continuation of a deeper connection, promote dialogue and a higher level of engagement between the community and our first nation's people", said Mr Kotzas.

Tickets are available at queenslandtheatre.com.au or by calling 136 246.

ABOUT MICHAEL TUAHINE:

As an entertainer, Michael has performed on some of the country's biggest stages after training and graduating from the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) where he distinguished himself with performances in plays by Chekhov, Tolstoy, Shakespeare and Edward Albee as well as the world premiere of *Country Music* by Oscar-nominated playwright Nick Enright.

After graduation, Tuahine carved out a career on the stage and screen with roles in films *Valentine's Day* (2008), *Sa Black Thing* (2005) and *Two Big Boys* (2007) as well as the TV series *Redfern Now* (2012), *Secrets and Lies: The Tract* (2013) and *Farscape* (1999).

His vocal and song-writing talents came to the public's attention in the highly successful band *AIM 4 MORE*, the first-ever all-Aboriginal boy group, and he has developed a reputation for hosting and performing at various events across Australia including the Australia Celebrates Australia Day Concert, The Deadly Awards and the National Indigenous Arts Awards 2012.

Michael's other passion is community development and in 2009 he created Community Leadership Solutions (CLS) with a vision to inspire personal leadership and responsibility and create positive change in Indigenous communities.

For interviews, imagery and more, please contact Kath Rose & Associates on 07 3357 9054 or mobile 0416 291 493 or email kath@kathrose.com